

Dear Friends:

It has been a privilege and an honor to represent you and your interests in the Washington State Senate these past ten years. I am constantly amazed at how involved and passionate you are on the issues of the day. The continued flow of e-mails, letters and phone calls to my office help me serve you better, thank you!

The 2004 Session was short (60 days), but packed full of committee hearings, budget meetings and floor sessions. With Senate Republicans in the majority these past two years, I feel like I was able to have a greater voice in contributing to my number one goal: To improve the economy and create jobs.

Even though Washington is no longer fighting Oregon and Alaska for the nation's highest unemployment rate, I believe we can—and must—do more to ensure that every citizen that wants and actively pursues a job can find one.

While I do not believe that government is better at creating or sustaining jobs than our free market system, I do believe that government can, at times, help the economy along. From streamlining permit processes and reducing government regulations to holding the line on state spending and offering tax incentives to businesses that relocate to rural areas, my first priority was to get people back to work.

I want to again thank all of you who came to Olympia to visit me during the session. Your input is valued more than you know. You help reaffirm my convictions and your involvement is greatly appreciated. Please let me know if there is ever anything that I or my office staff can do for you. We are here to serve you.

Sincerely,



Dan Swecker
State Senator
20th Legislative District



How to contact me

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Committees

Agriculture, Chair
Highways & Transportation
(Vice Chair)
Parks, Fish & Wildlife

Special Committees:

Transportation Permit
Efficiency & Accountability
Committee, Chairman;
Legislative Oversight
Committee on Public-Private
Partnerships in Transportation;
Task Force on the Funding of
State Parks & Outdoor
Recreation; Joint Task Force
on Land Use and Economic
Development; Washington
State Representative to
National Association of State
Aquaculture Coordinators;
Legislative Transportation
Committee (LTC); LTC
Commerce Corridor
Subcommittee.

Writing the budget

Last year, with former Senator Dino Rossi's leadership, the Legislature closed an astonishing \$2.8 billion budget deficit without raising taxes while still protecting our state's most vulnerable citizens.

Coming into this year, our goal was to do what we could to help the economy and jobs climate, while at the same time shoring up our state's "safety net" for those that are truly in need.

In our budget, we provided full funding for our state's nursing homes; preserved community mental health funding; enhanced domestic violence shelters and services; enhanced employment and day services for people with developmental disabilities; gave classified school employees—janitors, cooks, bus drivers, etc.—a small, one percent raise; and reduced government travel and consulting contracts by 10 percent (ultimately vetoed by Governor Locke).

We also left almost \$300 million in our state's reserve account to help offset any future budget deficits and once again, did not raise taxes!

Jobs – Jobs– Jobs

In an effort to keep—and attract—high-paying jobs in Washington state, I supported small, targeted tax incentives for high-tech research and development companies. The jobs protected and created by these incentives are vital to our state and regional economies. Studies show that every high-tech or biotech job creates as many as 3.4 additional indirect jobs, adding significant additional employment to Washington's economy.

Senior citizens and property taxes

I supported legislation (SB 5034) this year that will provide property tax relief for seniors and people who have retired because of physical disabilities. Also, the bill says that certain Medicaid insurance premiums can be deducted before calculating "disposable income." I encourage anyone who thinks they may qualify to contact their county assessor for further details.

Small businesses and health care

Anyone who owns or runs a small business knows how difficult it is to offer health care coverage for employees. Over the years, the state has mandated so many different kinds of coverage that most insurance carriers have left the state. And those that do offer coverage have to do so at incredible prices!

Many of us have been trying for several years to pass legislation that would allow small businesses to offer basic health care plans while giving employees the

option of purchasing more complete coverage if they desire. The idea is that some coverage is better than no coverage at all.

This year, we passed ESHB 2460 that addresses the issue. However, there is still debate over whether the final bill will actually allow the small group market to succeed. I fully support efforts to let small businesses offer basic health care plans and will back future legislation to that end should ESHB 2460 prove to be flawed.

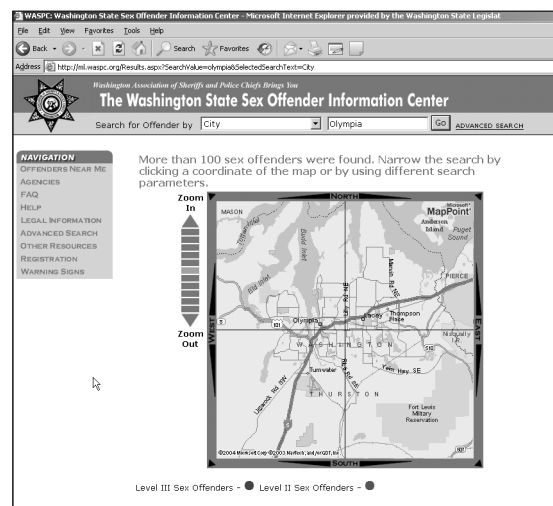
Protecting children and families from sex offenders

I also voted for HB 2400, which prevents the most dangerous sex offenders from entering alternative treatment programs instead of serving jail time. While treatment can be an option for some, for the most dangerous and devious sex offenders, treatment should not be in lieu of jail time.

Sex predator Web site allows parents to track potential threats

Also, legislation I supported last year to create a statewide sex offender database and Web site has gone into effect. There is now a website, created and maintained by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, where parents can see the location of the State's most serious sex offenders.

Families can now determine if a sex offender is living in their neighborhood. While the database does not provide the exact address of a sex offender, it does alert residents to the number of sex offenders in a particular area and the seriousness of their past offenses.



This Web site can be found at <http://ml.waspc.org>

TRANSPORTATION:**The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**

The Good: As vice chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, I worked vigorously with my Senate colleagues to ensure that \$800,000 was included in the transportation budget to help fund a new rail spur in Evaline for the proposed Cardinal glass plant. Building this rail spur is another step in building economic prosperity for Lewis County and attracting jobs to the region.

The Bad: The transportation budget also included \$400,000 to study the economics of extending the Spirit Lake Memorial Highway (Hwy 504) across the pumice plain of Mount St. Helens. This extension would be a serious boost to the local tourism industry, creating jobs and attracting more tourism dollars to Southwest Washington. However, Gov. Locke vetoed the money. Even so, I will continue to support this project and hope to see it us vote on it again next year.

The Ugly: My proposal to allow specific regions to plan and pay for transportation projects was again an issue of contention for some. Common sense shows that transportation problems—and solutions—are not limited to a county-by-county or a city-by-city basis. Congestion and freight mobility problems do not follow municipal boundaries. I believe the best transportation solutions will be ones done on a region-wide basis, not in piecemeal fashion. I hope to continue to work with both sides of this issue during the interim so that we can have a proposal ready to go for next session.

**FUTURE GOALS**

While we have accomplished much over the past few years, there is still work to be done. Here are a few things I will be working on:

Slowing the growth of Washington's minimum wage:

Washington has the highest minimum wage in the nation—more than \$2 higher than the federal minimum wage. This is causing businesses to reduce the size of their workforce and costing jobs. We need to tie minimum wage increases to the unemployment rate to encourage job creation.

Bringing justice back to the civil justice system:

The average person pays \$1,200 per year in “Lawsuit Taxes”—or added liability costs passed on the consumer by insurance companies, hospitals, doctors, homebuilders, manufacturers and other businesses. Frivolous lawsuits and outrageous jury awards are driving up costs for everyone, making health care more expensive and less accessible. We need to pass meaningful comprehensive liability reform.

Reforming the workers' compensation system:

After increasing workers' comp by 29.5 percent in 2003, rates were again raised by another 9.8 percent this year. We need to pass wage simplification to increase fairness and to stabilize the system against future double-digit increases.

Permit Streamlining:

My involvement with the Transportation Permit Efficiency and Accountability Committee (TPEAC) led me to sponsor legislation to create the Washington Regulatory Improvement Center (WRIC). With TPEAC, we've seen the benefits of a streamlined permit process for transportation projects when stakeholders are brought in at the beginning of the process. Multi agency and municipal trust, communication and support can be a difficult thing to achieve. But the payoff—in time and money saved—is worth it! I envision the WRIC as a place where the private sector can reap the benefits of an improved permitting process.

The Growth Management Act:

Simply put, if we're going to respect the influence and input from local governments, land use policies must be flexible. The 'one-size-fits-all' approach found in the Growth Management Act does not work. There must be a measure of flexibility that local governments can count on.

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Lewis County recently experienced the unwieldy authority of the GMA when a hearings board used a controversial definition of the phrase “long-term commercial significance” to find the county in “non-compliance.” While we worked hard to correct this through legislative means, they fell short. As a result, Lewis County could be forced to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees and court costs—all because of a discrepancy in a four-word term!

My goal is to reduce the burden of land use regulations and other roadblocks to affordable housing and to free private property owners from onerous, repetitive and cumbersome rules. I am committed to a land use approach that protects our environment, our natural resources and our economic recovery.

It has been a very busy four years with incredible developments that few could have anticipated. Of course the most urgent of those has been the terrorist attacks against innocent civilians and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a Viet Nam veteran and a member of the Joint Select Committee on Veterans’ and Military Affairs, my prayers are with the fine men and women who bravely face the challenges of uncertain combat and the sacrifices of nation building. Washington State has a large number of military bases with families who are faced with separation from loved ones and sometimes the horror of the ultimate sacrifice. To me, the challenges we face here at home pale in comparison to the contributions these dedicated individuals are making everyday in far off lands. If you, or a friend or member of your family ever need assistance in

dealing with veterans’ issues or concerns, please feel free to contact me at any time.



Sen. Swecker speaks at a pro-life rally in Olympia.

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